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PASS TO WHA/BSC
PEACE CORPS FOR DIRECTOR RONALD TSCHETTER

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ODIP](#) [PA](#)
SUBJECT: 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF PEACE CORPS IN PARAGUAY

11. SUMMARY: The Peace Corps celebrates 40 years of continuous service in Paraguay. The Peace Corps and the Embassy organized a gathering on August 20, 2007 to culminate the series of events carried out throughout the year to mark this important anniversary.
END SUMMARY

OVERVIEW OF PEACE CORPS IN PARAGUAY

12. (U) Peace Corps volunteers (PCVs) first arrived in Paraguay in 11967. Since then, Peace Corps Paraguay (PCP) programs have been instituted in six different areas: environment, agriculture, rural economic development, urban youth development, health, education, and municipal services. In the last four decades, more than 3,000 PCVs have worked in Paraguay. Michael Eschleman, current PC Director, served as a PCV twenty years ago in Paraguay.

13. (U) This year PC has more than 150 volunteers working throughout the country. Presently, PC is the program with the third largest number of active volunteers in the world. PC is also the oldest program of continuous service in the world.

PEACE CORPS PARAGUAY CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY

14. (U) Over the course of the year, the Peace Corps organized several events to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of PC presence. The Embassy played a key role in many of these events. In March 2007, Ambassador Cason and Foreign Minister Ruben Ramirez Lezcano visited the city of San Luis. They witnessed the local improvements on municipal services, and the potable water project completed earlier that month. They also inaugurated a new public library, which the American Embassy presented with a book donation.

15. (U) In April 2007, Ambassador Cason and Assistant Secretary Thomas Shannon swore in 29 new volunteers. This new group joined the 150-strong contingent of volunteers already working in Paraguay.

16. (U) PC produced an audio compact disc (CD) in Spanish as well as in Guarani, the Paraguayan indigenous language. The CD containing information on specific PCP projects and programs was distributed to Paraguayan radio stations throughout the country for public dissemination.

17. (U) Anniversary festivities culminated in a high-spirited ceremony held on August 20, 2007 at the Paraguayan-American Cultural Center in Asuncion. Ambassador Cason, Foreign Minister Ramirez Lezcano, Peace Corps Director Ronald Tschetter, and Peace Corps Director in Paraguay Michael Eschleman attended the event. During the ceremony, PC volunteers performed skits depicting their own experiences. A PC volunteer and a Paraguayan counterpart closed the ceremony performing traditional Paraguayan folk songs.

¶8. (U) The summit event was the unveiling of a commemorative Paraguayan postage stamp honoring the 40th Anniversary of the PC designed by PC volunteer Walid M. Shoaib. The stamp includes the Peace Corps original unmodified logo incorporated into a traditional Paraguayan embroidered lace. The stamp design also contains images of volunteers and counterparts in some of the various programs offered at PC. All these elements intertwined symbolize a relationship that has developed and strengthened during these 40 years of mutual collaboration.

¶9. (U) At the August ceremony, Paraguayans and Americans expressed their support and appreciation for the program. One PC volunteer expressed in his speech the satisfaction of bringing the spirit of generosity and technical skills that help Paraguayans use their natural resources in a more efficient manner. Meanwhile, Maria Teresa Portillo, a Paraguayan citizen from San Luis, presented a speech of appreciation for what volunteers have done in her area. Paraguayan citizens cherish 20-year old letters that former volunteers wrote to their parents. This exchange of culture and knowledge has a profound impact on the individual volunteers and the communities they serve. Through these programs, PCVs convey skills to Paraguayan nationals expected to lead to self-sufficiency and self-empowerment. Several former PCVs maintain contact with the organization and their Paraguayan hosts many years after their departure. Many former PCVs return to work to Paraguay in different capacities.

COMMENT

¶10. (U) The human relationships built between Peace Corps Volunteers and the Paraguayan public show that Americans care about people in other countries. The everyday work of PCVs in Paraguay reinforces the U.S. message of solidarity with foreign nations. Consequently, it is a particularly effective counter anti-U.S. influences from the grassroots level.

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